



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

## Meeting Minutes

### Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road  
Groton, CT 06340-4394  
Town Clerk 860-441-6640  
Town Manager  
860-441-6630

**Mayor Heather Bond Somers, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Rita M. Schmidt, James L. Streeter, and Harry A. Watson**

**Tuesday, July 31, 2012**

**6:00 PM**

**Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1**

#### **SPECIAL MEETING - REVISED**

#### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

*Mayor Somers called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.*

#### **2. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Somers, Councilor Flax, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt and Councilor Streeter

Members Absent: Councilor Antipas, Councilor Johnson and Councilor Watson

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.*

*Board of Education: Robert Peruzzotti, Kim Watson, Chaz Zzulka, Beverly Washington, Rita Volkmann, Kirsten Hoyt (by telephone)*

#### **3. NEW BUSINESS**

**2012-0005**

##### **Joint Meeting with Board of Education (2012 Standing Referral)**

##### **Discussed**

- *Establishment of School Facilities Initiative Task Force*

*Mike Zuba and Rebecca Auger of Milone and MacBroom were present to address the Committee of the Whole and Board of Education. Mr. Zuba provided background on Milone and MacBroom (M&M) and the firm's current projects which include working with the Town on the update of the Plan of Conservation and Development. He reviewed a PowerPoint presentation noting that the planning components of a long range school facilities plan are demographics, housing, enrollment patterns and projections, and classroom facilities. M&M's philosophy involves consensus building through public outreach and they work closely with staff and the designated committee. Mr. Zuba emphasized the importance of establishing clear goals and criteria to guide the process. M&M will also develop an implementation plan.*

*M&M is currently two months into the redistricting process with the Board of Education. The firm has reviewed past redistricting plans, reallocated students according to the current middle school plan, compiled baseline information, and toured the school facilities. Mr. Zuba noted that there are complex issues facing Groton Public Schools and the Town needs a long range plan as well as near-term strategies.*

*Ms. Auger explained that M&M has analyzed population, housing and economic conditions by neighborhood and looked at historic enrollment trends. An enrollment distribution analysis shows that there are many students attending schools outside of their home district. Reasons for this include school choice, special needs, waivers requested and overcrowding. M&M has also analyzed birth data and school capacity. Enrollment projections show a slight decline over the next five years. Ms. Auger noted that community input is obtained through community surveys, establishment of a representative committee, public meetings, workshops and listening sessions, and the use of various forms of communication.*

*Mr. Zuba explained that a Visioning Workshop facilitated by M&M would identify strengths, opportunities, and issues; develop a vision for the school system; and establish a consensus on planning criteria. Options would be explored and the impacts assessed relative to enrollments, staffing, state mandates, transportation, neighborhood impacts, and educational programs and objectives.*

*Establishment of the committee can be facilitated by Milone & MacBroom. Mr. Zuba recommends a parent representative from each school; elected officials; school administrators; and representatives of the community-at-large. The committee must be balanced.*

*Mayor Somers reviewed a list of people who have already volunteered to serve.*

*Councilor Peruzzotti asked about timing for the project. Mr. Zuba noted that the project is being driven by state mandates and he estimated about seven months.*

*Discussion followed on M&M's access to current data. Mr. Zuba noted that he will be looking at the status of Pfizer as part of the POCD process.*

*Councilor Flax asked if M&M are instrumental in implementing the plan. Mr. Zuba explained that there will be an implementation plan provided, but M&M does not offer design and architectural services. M&M's proposed fee is \$40,000 for the duration of the study, estimated at seven months.*

*Discussion followed on redistricting. M&M will know based on enrollments that the redistricting plan will work unless there is a major event. They provide eight years of projections as required by the state, but they are confident only out to five years. In Groton, the difficulty lies with projecting the military population, but M&M can look at historic data to do those projections.*

*Mayor Somers thanked Mr. Zuba and Ms. Auger for their presentation.*

*Discussion followed on building consensus among the Town Council and Board of Education. Mayor Somers stated she will not appoint a committee until the full board and council express support for moving forward with a facilitator.*

*Town Manager Oefinger noted that the M&M presentation on August 13th will focus on redistricting and it would be beneficial for everyone to be there. He stated it is critical that as many Town Councilors and Board of Education members as possible be on the same page. The voters are looking for leadership and consensus on a direction for the schools. They do not want a divided Board of Education or a Town Council that wants the voters to decide. After seven months of study, the groups should agree that the plan is the best one to move forward.*

*Discussion followed on next steps including obtaining consensus to hire a facilitator to come up with a long range plan for the school system and setting up a committee to look at the Vision Committee report. The facilitator will help to set up a survey on the failure of the last referendum.*

*Councilor Peruzzotti suggested that it is important that the groups be willing to act on the plan once it is developed.*

*Washington expressed concern with the impact the Superintendent situation will have on the process.*

**2010-0215****Community Access Television Application to DPUC**

**A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to enter executive session at 7:20 p.m. to discuss 2010-0215 Community Access Television Application to DPUC and to invite Town Attorney Mike Carey and Town Manager Mark Oefinger to attend.**

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

*The executive session concluded at 7:28 p.m.*

**4. ADJOURNMENT**

*The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.*